

# RAMSEY URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

## REPORT

### OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH, For the Year 1925.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present my Report respecting the Health and Sanitary conditions of this District for the year 1925. This District is about 17,000 acres in area of which 2,300 is so called high land, *i.e.* land not intersected by Rivers and Dykes, but chiefly lands rising from a few feet to perhaps forty (40) above sea level, the other being mostly Fen (14713 acres) divided by Waterways, Dykes and Rivers, and drainage being good (excepting a few ponds made to water cattle) leaves the surface either in Winter from the pumping out which is necessary to keep the water from flooding the land, and owing to the continual evaporation in Summer, and absorbing of the lands from the surrounding Dykes, and the necessity of re-letting the river water in to keep sufficient moisture for the crops grown, therefore, excepting for a few ponds, owing to the rain feeding the rivers which in turn finds its way into Dykes when required, in Summer there is perhaps with the exception of dry seasons in the few hottest months no stagnant water, though the flow at that time may be somewhat retarded.

One Penny Rate for District <sup>raises</sup> equals, 95. £

One Penny Rate for Town only, about 50. £

District Rate ... .. 3/4 per year.

County Rate ... *in the ... pound* 7/4 per year.

Internal Drainage varies *per acre* about 4/- per year.

Middle Level varying. In addition Ouse Drainage also varies.

Population for the year <sup>1921</sup> was estimated at 5,135 the Census 5,328; 1922—5,168, 1923—5,277 and 1924—5,334 and, for 1925 I am working upon as the basis of 5366. The figures more or less show a stationary population and were it not for the new Houses 168 in town and in the outlying portions

erected soon after the War, and assured by heavy loan from the Government, I feel sure the inhabitants of this District would have scarcely reached 5,000. Owing to the shortage of Houses, elsewhere the number still residing here find occupation from 12 and 15 miles away, many travelling that distance daily. As more Houses are erected away so will the tendency for the population to increase lessen.

**BIRTHS.**—116 : 59 Males and 57 Females, Illegitimate 1 Male and 5 Females. These births compare with 70 Males 47 Females for 1924; 69 Males 73 Females 1923, 79 Males 61 Females for 1922, and 66 Males 54 Females for 1921, an average of 68 Males and 58 Females or together 126 in the 5 years. Males seem to predominate and with the present depression past experience will show a tendency to a greater Male birth-rate for the present year.

Birth Rate per 1,000 England and Wales, 1925,		18'3
"	" Ramsey ... ..	21'6
Deaths	" England and Wales ...	12'2
"	" Ramsey ... ..	8'7
"	" England and Wales of Children	
under 12 Months, 75 per 1,000.		
"	" Ramsey 43 per 1,000.	

**DEATHS.**—47, *i.e.* 24 Males and 23 Females comparing with 41, the 47 represented a death-rate of 8'7 against 7'5 the previous year and an average of just under 10 per 1,000 for the last 5 years or 9'8 to be correct, a record that has not been equalled in the past and owing to so many of the young departing to better themselves after leaving School, as all youths cannot find work upon the tolerably productive lands, must tend to raise the death-rate in which proportion usually above 46 per cent are over 65 and this year (1925) were 29 of the 47 above with an average age over 76 : 14 Males and 15 Females probably an unusual adverse ratio of sexes, and can only be accounted for by women here who probably work harder than some men in addition to household duties and when required, work on the land. These 29 aged respectively over 51 per cent of all deaths registered. Of those under 12 months 5, 1 Male and 4 Females comparing with 6 last year (3 of each sex), it is unusual in Infant deaths for the Females to predominate, 4 of these were premature and lived from 1 hour to 8 days and the other dying at 4 months from Diarrhœa was from T.B. parents, these 5 deaths represent 43 per 1000 births 1924 rate was 51, (1923) 70, (1922) 80 and (1921) 75, *i.e.* in each year, correspondingly lower than the average for the Country and there is little doubt that the two Parish Nurses, who include in their duties Health visiting materially help by making lax parents take a greater interest in their families, especially when they are numerous.

**INFLUENZA.**—Though general was not of a virulent character; 1 death was recorded against 2 the previous year, 5 for 1922 and 1 for 1921.

**PNEUMONIA.**—Three cases notified, but no deaths against 1 notified and 4 deaths attributed, 1922, and 2 notified and 3 deaths. These discrepancies are easy to understand when, perhaps, this is not the primary cause of death; and it is now some years since this district was attacked by a most virulent form.

**WHOOPING COUGH.**—This shows itself in the Autumn and sticks more or less to the district confined, some having a rough passage, but manage to get over it. In the last five years 1 died in 1922. In the past Autumn it was prevalent round the Mere and Forty Foot District,

**SCARLET FEVER.**—9 notified against none the previous year; 1 in 1923, 9 in 1922 and 5 in 1921, and 1 death was attributed in that year which was in a child (girl) of 3 with "Brights."

**DIPHTHERIA.**—Two notified, one in a rather cramped part of the town broke out in June, and the other in a teacher in St. Mary's District was detected in November; 2 were notified in 1924; 3 in 1923; 9 in 1922 and 14 in 1921. There was one fatal case in 1922, a boy left in a room upstairs getting out of bed and collapsing and found upon the floor.

Rooms	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	
Scarlet - -				2	2	1		} 1921
Diphtheria - -			6		6	2		
Scarlet - -			2	4	1	1		} 1922
Diphtheria - -	1		2		5	2		
Scarlet - -						1		} 1923
Diphtheria - -					3			
Scarlet - -								} 1924
Diphtheria - -					1	1		
Scarlet - -	1		3	2	1		1	} 1925
Diphtheria - -			1			1		

**MEASLES.**—Not notifiable and though from time to time there are slight outbreaks in some portions of this District no deaths in the past 5 years were recorded in spite of some cases being tolerably virulent.

**SMALLPOX.**—It is not usual for me to advocate centralization but with a small County like this it seems that much economy might result if a Central Isolation Hospital that may never be required, might be erected and arrangements made to furnish and equip it so that upon an outbreak this case or cases expeditiously carried to some centre, their expense being furnished out of the County Rate. The remarks made by medical men in the past have fallen flat upon the uneducated and others, who ought to know better and a few cranks. About 5,000 cases were notified in this Country last year, happily mostly of a mild character, but it is most probable that number will be greatly exceeded this year, I might remind all, that this Disease has nothing to do with dirt or poverty and therefore can only advise one means of immunisation viz : vaccination. An inexpensive means of Isolation is ready in case of 2 cases happening and the County Medical Officer has kindly offered to send me a nurse, etc. if required.

**CEREBRO SPINAL.**—No case.

**TUBERCULOSIS.**—10 notified, 6 Lung and 4 localised elsewhere comparing with 6, 6, 5 and 7 and deaths for 1925 were 3 respiratory and one of the other forms comparing 1 Lung and 2 other forms the previous year 5 for 1923, 5 for 1922 and 2 for 1921. Though I consider all forms of Tuberculosis are decreasing, there is little doubt that year by year more cases will be notified owing to the spotting of children of school age by the T.B. examinations that are being carried on periodically at the schools and it is yet to be discovered whether Bovine Tuberculosis immunes that subject from the more virulent form in later life.

1925	Deaths: Lung	3	Male	1	Female	2
	Other than lung	1	„	1	„	0
1924	Deaths: Lung	1	„	1	„	0
	Other than lung	2	„	0	„	2
1923	Deaths: Lung	4	„	2	„	2
	Other than lung	1	„	1	„	0
1922	Deaths: Lung	1	„	1	„	0
	Other than lung	4	„	4	„	0
1921	Deaths, Lung	2	„	2	„	0
	Other than lung	0	„	0	„	0

**CANCER.**—9: 4 Males and 5 Females against 7 and 2 the previous year 1924; 1923—3 and 4; 1922—6 and 6; 1921—2 and 5 All these years an increase upon the previous five years. I do not really believe there is an increase of deaths from that disease though certain figures point that way. I wonder if the population could be persuaded to revert to eating potatoes boiled in their skins instead of eating so much salt and wholemeal bread and less meat would eventually be found more helpful towards reducing this increasing fatality.



**RAINFALL.**—21'46 against 26'63 and 22'95 in the year 1923. Generally speaking the rainfall is light in all Eastern Counties. Rain was badly distributed over the year, just over 8 inches fall in the first 6 months, and 13 inches at the latter half, January registering 81 and June only 20, when most needed, averaging from 1½ and 2½ less than in the London Area.

**WATER SUPPLY.**—The last 3 years have been favourable owing to the Rainfall being much over the average for this District and was put very much to the test when a Laundry was started just outside, which absorbed probably over 10,000 gallons daily and the Well that was robbed being only capable of giving probably only a fifth of that amount daily. Eventually the source was dried up and the firm, to our salvation, had to move to other climes. It was nearly 3 months before Water was able to be pumped from this Well, so now the same supply as previously is with us and plentiful, but highly polluted. Having to be fetched from the various pumps; many have to carry this Water over 50 yards. The labour thus expended tends in the poor to minimise its adequate use. As I have previously stated that about a gallon per head is being used this way and is obviously insufficient even if supplemented by rain caught in small tubs. Many cottagers through constantly moving, do not possess one of these and landlords of these poor tenants do not usually supply one so some of the less clean live in dirty and insanitary surroundings. Peterborough and Marham supply through Chatteris has been approached as a suitable source, correspondence has not yet matured. Huntingdon and St. Ives for various reasons are neither favoured. We have now to fall back upon the East of the Town or the "Brook," both will have to be treated before being fit for consumption, I myself have always favoured the "Brook" as best of necessary evils.

**SEWAGE &c.**—There is little to add to that previously stated with the exception that expense is great administering over £800, but the results obtained through the general efficiency and the scavenging is giving satisfaction and so much of the rubbish from Ashpits is being consumed by the Incinerators (two small ones are kept going), and more Houses are draining into the side arches that flow to the "Basin" converting it into a large Septic Tank. A system to drain all this matter into two Septic Tanks one on each side of the River has been under consideration in past and previous years and is shelved owing to expense. I believe that should the threat of dividing the issue between the Town and outside district and the latter were to cut adrift, the Town alone could attend to both schemes after borrowing money at about 3/6 rate, as now understood it is worth consideration especially, when probably half the 800 might as an offset be saved.

**HOUSES.**—As in previous years there is always a waiting list for any vacancy either in or out of Town but I consider this District can very well keep pace with the requirements and the waiting list will not be nearly so great when those workers that go away are able to find accommodation nearer their occupation. There are both in and out of Town still a number of Houses requiring pulling down. The number of New Houses erected last year 1925—5, 1924—7, 1923—4 1922—114, 1921—54. The Council considers there is not a great demand for more Houses, so have not encouraged private owners to apply for the subsidy.

**BAKEHOUSES.**—As previously reported are well kept, none underground.

**SLAUGHTER HOUSES.**—As previously reported *i.e.* one suitably erected and the others have been in use for years, not suitably constructed.

**COWSHEDS.**—I am repeating last years remarks *i.e.* there is only ordinary milk sold. No certified or grade A. and none sent away. Owing to the shortage of grass lands, not nearly so many cows are kept that might or would be otherwise. Therefore many of the poor, owing to the price of milk being from 1d. to 2d. more than in many Districts are using tinned. Many families I am sure consume less than  $\frac{1}{3}$  pint per head. The grass lands do not seem to be hired by those most in need of it, therefore the restriction in the number of cows that could be kept.

**GENERAL CONDITIONS.**—There are several green patches in the Town for children to play upon, but last Autumn the Council, deemed it advisable to acquire a field near to the Back Green to give more latitude, and lessen the chances of accidents to the young. At present, it is too soon to observe whether they will make this a rendezvous as many, after coming out of school prefer to use the road to and from their homes.

The "Basin" now receives much more of the house drainage, including all from the newly erected houses that were built in the last few years and it makes it imperative that the water and sewage should be the first to claim attention.

I remain

Your obedient Servant,

E. EVAN LLEWELLYN.

## Summary of Sanitary Work for the Year 1925.

	1924	1925
No. of Houses inspected under Housing Act		
1909 ... ..	451	562
„ Unfit for Habitation ... ..	Nil	4
„ Houses, the defects in which were remedied without Closing Orders ...	8	4

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### NUISANCES.

No. of Nuisances reported and abated ..	48	98
„ Houses Disinfected ... ..	4	13
„ Informal Notices served ... ..	21	7
„ Statutory Notices served ... ..	Nil	7
„ Pail Closets Emptied... ..	657	657
„ Privies Emptied ... ..	200	200
„ Ashbins Emptied ... ..	443	450
„ Ashpits Emptied ... ..	210	207
„ New Houses Erected ... ..	7	5
„ Registered Slaughter Houses ... ..	6	6
„ Registered Dairies ... ..	25	26

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„ Population ... ..	5334	5366
„ Dwelling Houses ... ..	1311	1316
„ „ Working Class ... ..	800	800

**F. G. LEIGH,**

*Sanitary Inspector.*

